

# The Lexile Tour Guide



## Special points of interest:

- Access information at [www.lexile.com](http://www.lexile.com).
- Lexile your classroom library for easier access.
- Differentiate instruction based on Lexiles.
- Access resources to meet educational needs.

## What is a Lexile?

A Lexile is a unit for measuring text difficulty and reader comprehension. MetaMetrics, developer of The Lexile Framework® for Reading, was the first organization to take readability of text and comprehension of students and put the two together. By expressing these two functions on the same scale, teachers and parents are better able to target and personalize reading selections.

All major standardized reading tests and many popular reading programs, as well as hundreds of publishers, report student Lexiles. Students are considered to be at an appropriate level when they can comprehend approximately 75 percent of the material they read. This ensures students are neither frustrated nor bored, thereby stimulating their learning processes while rewarding their current reading abilities.

Lexile measures are based on two predictors of how difficult a text is to comprehend, those being semantic difficulty (word frequency) and syntactic complexity (sentence length). In order to Lexile a book or article, text is split into 125-word slices. Each slice is compared to the nearly 600-million word Lexile corpus (the largest repository of text in the world), taken from a variety of sources and genres, and words in each sentence are counted. These calculations are put into the Lexile equation. Each slice's resulting Lexile measure is applied to the Rasch psychometric model to determine the Lexile measure for the entire text.

Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) developed the Rasch unIT (RIT) score – a unit for measuring student growth in achievement along a continuum of learning. One of the ways this score is used is to measure reading comprehension and then link it to the Lexile. This link allows educators to use the student's RIT score to find reading materials that will be appropriately challenging for each student.

Many NWEA reports contain both Lexile and RIT information.

## The Lexile Web Site

The Lexile web site can be accessed at [www.lexile.com](http://www.lexile.com). From the homepage click on the **Educators** panel. From this page, you have access to many resources, tools, and FAQ's. You can start by clicking the **Resources** tab at the top of the page. This section contains many excellent articles on using Lexiles in the classroom and library settings, topics important to teachers and parents, suggestions for activities, and the *LearningLink* newsletter.

**"Teachers welcome a  
method that consistently  
matches books with student  
comprehension levels."**

Amy Ely  
Literacy Coach  
Brush Middle School  
Brush County Public Schools, CO

## Searching for Titles

In addition to the online search feature with your new Lexile Report, you can search thousands of titles (both Spanish and English) on the Lexile web site free of charge (there is a link at the top of your Lexile Report in the Dynamic Reporting Suite). The regular search feature allows you to search by title, author,

Lexile range, keyword, or ISBN #. By using the detailed search on the same page, you can also search by such criteria as Lexile code (targeting special characteristics of the text), publisher, book awards, fiction vs. non-fiction, etc.

An additional field you can use in your detailed search is the Development Rating (e.g., Elementary, Middle, or High School, College/Professional, Not Rated). This rating is supplied by the publisher and is not available for all titles (only about 1/3 have this designation).

To search for a title in the Lexile Book Database, click on the **Book Search** tab at the top of any page on their web site or use the **Quick Book Search** option on the left side of every page. Simply type in a title and click **Search**. The Lexile Book Database is updated monthly and currently includes many thousands of books and periodicals that have been analyzed and assigned a Lexile rating.

**“Lexile is more than a tool. It is becoming a very important way of helping students to become more independent readers. I have never seen students read so much . . . it is fantastic.”**

Kaye Hollifield  
Pumpkin Center Middle School  
Lincoln County Schools  
Lincolnton, NC

## Lexile Your Own Text

The Lexile web site offers educators an opportunity to receive a Lexile rating for a particular body of text that they would like analyzed. This is a convenient tool if you cannot find a particular Lexiled document in the extensive database. Another practical application for using this resource would be to submit students' writing samples at both the beginning and end of the school year to track improvement over time. Secondary English teachers may assign students the task of writing a newspaper article at a certain grade level or Lexile. This feature enables those students to analyze their own work to be certain they are following the guidelines of the assignment.

The Lexile Analyzer is accessed by selecting the **Tools** tab and then choosing **Lexile Analyzer** in the navigation bar on the left side of the page.

Before using The Lexile Analyzer tool for the first time, you must first fill out the free online registration form to choose your personal ID and password to access the tool. A hyperlink to the registration area is just below the Sign-in box. It is a relatively simple procedure and your ID and password will be assigned almost immediately.

Also, be sure the text you are analyzing is in a *text* document format (ending extension is .txt as opposed to, say, a Microsoft® Word document ending in .doc) before submitting it for analysis.

It is important to note that your Lexiled material will not be added to the searchable database. We Lexiled this document in this manner and it Lexiled at 1130L.

## Tools for Teachers

### Lexile Power Vocabulary

A Lexile score doesn't evaluate genre, theme, content, or interest; therefore, it is important to review materials before assigning them to students. Even though the Lexile rating may be appropriate, the content may not be for that student or your class.

Students may be able to read more difficult content if it is an area of interest for the child since they may already be familiar with some of the vocabulary necessary to comprehend the text.

On the opposite side of that, keep in mind that when teaching a new content area, new vocabulary may need to be pre-taught before the student can fully comprehend the text they are reading.

To assist with this, Lexile has created Lexile Power Vocabulary lessons that are available online. Lexile Power Vocabulary is a systematic and individualized approach to vocabulary development that enables teachers to assist students in grades 2 through 12 to improve their reading comprehension skills.

By utilizing the Lexile Framework, educators and parents can provide vocabulary development, via word lists and activities, keyed to new words that may be unfamiliar to the reader of a particular text.

To access Lexile Power Vocabulary lessons, click on the **Tools** tab at the top of any page in the Educator's section of the Lexile web site. You can then select the **Lexile Power Vocabulary** link on the left side of the page. You then have the option of narrowing your search by selecting a letter of the alphabet. This will bring up the entire list of Lexiled titles that are being worked on for that letter. The right-hand columns provide the links to the instructional applications: student word lists, activities and assessments (S), and the teacher answer keys (T). Lexile Power Vocabulary lessons are developed in a two-stage process: words are selected and instructional applications are developed. For books where the instructional applications have yet to be developed, a vocabulary list is provided (W).

### Lexile Reading Pathfinders

A Pathfinder is a list of titles either based around a certain Lexile range or a certain topic or theme. NWEA has developed a master set of *Reading Pathfinders* around Lexile ranges that are available at [www.nwea.org](http://www.nwea.org) >> **Member Support** >> **Results and Reports** >> **Lexile Scores**. Additional Pathfinders can be accessed from the **Tools** tab at the top of any page of the Lexile web site. From the Tools page, click the link for **Lexile Reading Pathfinders** on the left side of the page. They have two lists – the first is by “series” (fiction titles, for example, [The Boxcar Children](#)). This information can assist the reader in deciding which books in the series to read first because they are written at an easier level.

Teachers will find the Subject Pathfinder lists organized by “topic” useful. These lists address the task of differentiating instruction for the wide range of ability levels found within a classroom. For example, the Sports section contains books with varying Lexile measures from 630L to 1160L. By using this information, teachers can match students in the class with a book near his or her actual reading level within the sports category.

Now all of the students in your class can read supplementary material about the unit they are studying in class, while at the same time reading material appropriate for their individual reading levels.

### Individualizing Instruction with Lexiles

In your classroom, what is the range of students' reading levels from lowest to highest? How do you currently attempt to ensure your students are reading at the appropriate level when you teach a unit? Is every child assigned to read the same materials?

Knowing what you know about Lexiles now should give you some guidance in answering these questions. By using the Lexile resources available to you, meeting students where they are instructionally is possible.

### Lexiling Your Library – Suggestions and Ideas

These ideas are excerpts from *The Lexile Times* Newsletters from January and February 2002 and were all submitted by school staff:

- Create student passports; students get stamps and credit for reading books listed in their passport.
- Encourage students to select books of interest and appropriate readability.
- Arrange the library in Lexile zones.
- Use color-coded dots on the book spines; this makes it easy for the younger students who aren't yet capable of using the online catalog.
- Record the actual Lexile measure on the inside of the front or back cover of the book.
- Include the Lexile measure on the spine of the book.

In the September 2002 issue of *The Lexile Times* Newsletter, a California teacher, Rick Powels, gives suggestions for how he uses Lexiles in his classroom. The following ideas are based on Rick's suggestions.

- One suggestion is if you are teaching a unit in science on electricity, for example, you can search the Lexile online database for electricity-related titles. You can also search the EBSCO titles database ([www.EBSCO.com](http://www.EBSCO.com)) for periodicals that have been Lexiled on that topic. Once you have access to multiple materials, you can “scaffold” these and assign the students topic-related materials at the appropriate Lexile level in order to increase their fluency.
- Another suggestion is to analyze students' writing samples periodically throughout the year in order for students to see their own work Lexiled. This may give you more insight to guide students in how they create their sentence structure or other specific areas of concern.
- He also suggests letting any student read any book – not just ones within that student's Lexile range. It is important to check in with students, however, to make sure the student is having success with that book. Fluency can be increased by taking home books at a lower Lexile level than they would normally read and have them practice the vocabulary contained in that book.

### Language Arts and Reading Best Practice Resources

- **Reading and the High School Student: Strategies to Enhance Literacy** by Judith Irvin and Douglas Buehl
- **University of Connecticut** – [www.literacy.uconn.edu](http://www.literacy.uconn.edu). This site contains a wealth of information around the topic of literacy and may be the most comprehensive on the web. You will find extensive information around comprehension, vocabulary, literary analysis, age-group orientations (multi-age, middle school, etc.), and much more, including links to other resources on the web.
- **International Reading Association** – [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org). The IRA provides reading teachers of all levels with a variety of resources and web links.
- **NCTE** – [www.ncte.org](http://www.ncte.org). The National Council of Teachers of English is a national organization with affiliates in all states. They have a number of resources on their web site to support teachers of reading, writing, and the language arts.
- **The Learning Street** – [www.learningstreet.org](http://www.learningstreet.org).
- **Achieving General Literacy** – [www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/](http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/). MCREL has produced a list of subject matter terms and phrases for grade-level spans. The terms were drawn from the knowledge and skills contained in each standard and benchmark in the standards database, “Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards & Benchmarks for K-12 Education.”